

Chairman Powell and Members of the Committee:

This statement is in response to the inquiry into media ownership regulations being conducted through the Media Ownership Working Group (MOWG).

I commend your work to keep the business of the FCC a living process by examining the regulations it puts forth and evaluating the scope and relevance of these rules in our world of ever-changing technology, media, and definitions of ownership.

While I applaud your work, I am concerned that the outcome of MOWG will be to relax or lift the important regulations in place that limit the number of single media sources a corporation can own in any one market, and that limit the ownership of multiple media types by one corporation in any given market. These regulations help insure more diverse viewpoints in reporting, and coverage of local issues. The system isn't perfect and these regulations don't create diversity in reporting and programming just by their existence. Nevertheless, these rules prevent markets from slipping over time, under centralized control.

Recent problems that have surfaced regarding corporate responsibility should make all of us wary of unregulated industries. The accounting scandals at Adelphia, Enron, Global Crossing, WorldCom, Xerox, and others, and the unethical practices of energy suppliers in California's recently de-regulated power industry are but two examples that remind us of the important role regulations play in keeping corporate practices in check.

We already have a complex system of media ownership that, in the eyes of some, lead to self-censorship by journalists and editors whose employers are owned by or have close ties to large corporations. Because there are other sources with different owners, however, we do hear those important investigative stories. There are many accounts of, for example, NBC choosing not to report on stories that disclose negative information about parent company GE. Thankfully, ABC is free to do the report. So how can a particular media market be assured free and thorough reporting if the only news it receives comes through one source? Competition balanced with limited ownership regulations has ensured this thus far.

Another concern of mine is the preservation of local topics. As radio, television, and newspapers become more centralized, local coverage suffers. Less money and time is devoted to local news coverage and programming on television, Radio DJs play less local music as they lose control of their shows to centralized programming implemented by their stations parent company.

These are important issues that I hope your commission and MOWG will look into thoroughly and fairly. Free and diverse media is critical to the vibrancy of this process we cherish called democracy. To allow content to be controlled by any centralizing power, be it government or corporation, serves a swift blow to this process. It silences voices and robs us of a diversity of culture and viewpoints that make America great.

For these reasons, I ask that you ensure the richness of our democracy by keeping in place current media ownership regulations.

Sincerely,

Dirk Adams  
Roslindale, MA